The IAPF and the Peace Settlement

Although firefights and sniping incidents continued throughout the intervention, significant combat operations in Santo Domingo, with one exception, ceased after the GNR sweep of the northern part of the city during the third week in May. After *operación limpieza*, the cordon of U.S. troops facing Constitutionalist forces in Ciudad Nueva acquired a dual function: it continued to keep the bulk of Caamaño's forces bottled up, but it now protected them as well from any effort by the Government of National Reconstruction to impose a military solution to the crisis. That the United States would pay more than lip service to its proclaimed "neutrality" came as an unpleasant surprise to President Imbert. When the incredulous general declared that U.S. troops would not stop him should there be "no other way out" than to break the cease-fire and attack Caamaño, Embassy officials took swift "action to set him straight on this." As he quickly learned, the U.S. military presence was now "directed toward maintaining the cease-fire and developing a negotiated settlement that would provide a broad based U.S. oriented government." On 2 June, Imbert appeared to accept this reality, albeit reluctantly, when he "announced full support of the OAS and proposed OAS-sponsored elections as a way out of the deadlocked political issues."[1]

The general's reference to the OAS is significant. The failure of the Bundy mission in late May to arrange a political settlement signaled an end to unilateral U.S. initiatives to open negotiations between the two sides. The OAS moved with uncharacteristic alacrity into the void created by Bundy's departure. Dr. José A. Mora, the OAS secretary general who had been in Santo Domingo since 1 May, attempted to keep the possibility of negotiations alive until he could transfer peacemaking functions to a new three-man OAS Committee. Palmer hailed the arrival of the committee on 4 June as the beginning of "a new era." "The arena is now almost purely political and psychological," he reported, "with the military furnishing the power back-up as the necessary muscle to enforce a solution." As another indication that the crisis was entering a new phase, the military muscle to which Palmer referred would, in the form of the Inter-American Peace Force (IAPF), come under the jurisdiction of the OAS. With these political and military initiatives, the OAS, according to one U.S. source, "assumed the responsibility for the stability operation."[2]

Department of State

Ellsworth Bunker, the U.S. ambassador to the OAS

In the political realm, OAS leadership was more nominal than real. Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker of the United States headed the three-man commission as its principal negotiator—the man who called the shots—and he took his guidance more often from the White House than from the OAS. Despite the multilateral façade, the United States would retain tight control over the political process.

A strong case cannot be so readily made for U.S. domination of the IAPF. The idea for a multilateral military force within the hemisphere did not originate with the Dominican crisis. As early as 1961, the United States had broached the idea of a permanent inter-American military organization. Among the unstated reasons for doing so was a belief that such an organization would deter intrahemispheric conflicts, discourage pro-Communist tendencies, promote security within Latin American countries, and, in the event of a hemispheric crisis, obviate unilateral U.S. intervention. The OAS made little progress toward enacting the proposal, in part because the Pentagon wanted U.S. operational control over the regional force, in part because Latin Americans feared that an IAPF would serve as a thinly disguised cover for a return to Big Stick diplomacy.[3] Both these concerns would affect efforts to establish a multilateral force during the Dominican revolt.

From the early days of the crisis, the Johnson administration sought to wrap U.S. activities in the mantle of hemispheric support. Appreciative

of OAS support for the deployment of marines, LBJ, ever sensitive to criticism, recoiled when several members of the organization reacted bitterly to his sending in the 82d Division without consulting them. It fell to Bunker, as U.S. ambassador to the OAS, to explain Washington's unilateral intervention to his colleagues in an effort to repair the damage. The main thrust of his argument was that, having no hemispheric military force to which it could turn, the United States had to go it alone to protect its citizens and interests. To counter charges that the United States was returning to a policy of intervening at will in the internal affairs of other nations in the hemisphere, Bunker proposed on 1 May an OAS resolution calling on member states to provide military contingents for duty in the Dominican Republic. To improve the chances for prompt passage of the resolution, U.S. officials promised to provide airlift for any Latin American troops sent into the troubled country. They also mounted a massive lobbying campaign in Washington, in Santo Domingo, and throughout the hemisphere to promote the measure. On 6 May, after what seemed an interminable debate, the foreign ministers of the OAS, meeting in Washington, passed the resolution by a vote of fourteen to five (Chile, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, and Uruguay voting in the negative), with Venezuela abstaining.[4]

The decision to establish what was initially called the Inter-American Armed Force (IAAF) gave President Johnson, in the words of a recent study, "a legitimate umbrella under which to operate" until details concerning the composition, organization, command, and support of the unit could be worked out. Even during the debate, U.S. diplomats and military officers, through a series of discussions with their Latin American counterparts, had tried to determine what countries would or could furnish troops for the multilateral force. As early as 5 May, CINCSOUTH had compiled a list of units that certain Latin American countries might agree to contribute to the IAAF. Encompassing a wide range of forces from a Uruguayan platoon to two battalions each from Argentina and Brazil, the list had to be pared after 6 May because it included some of the countries that had voted against the resolution. After the vote, U.S. diplomats intensified their drive to encourage Latin American governments to contribute forces. For its part, the JCS made known its preference for Latin American infantry units trained in counterguerrilla and riot-control tactics. As late as 9 May, the administration still hoped for the participation of Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela, Colombia, and the five Central American nations. Most of these expectations fell victim to domestic politics in several key countries, to public demonstrations against the U.S. intervention, or, in the case of Argentina, to concern over the role Brazil would play in the IAAF. When the final troop list appeared, it included (in addition to the United States) only six Latin American countries: Brazil (1,130 men), Honduras (250), Paraguay (184), Nicaragua (160), Costa Rica (21 military policemen), and El Salvador (3 staff officers).[5]

CINCSOUTH and CINCAFLANT worked out arrangements for Operation Press Ahead, the airlifting of the Latin American contingents to the Dominican Republic. The first units to arrive, with only two hours' notice to U.S. officials in Santo Domingo, composed a reinforced rifle company

Department of State

Honduran troops arriving in the Dominican Republic

from Honduras. Despite the high morale of the men, the condition of the company left those officers who met it dejected. "The unit's total organizational equipment," USFORDOMREP reported, "consisted of a still crated kitchen it had never seen before." As for the men, each had only a mess kit, poncho, M1 rifle, and twenty rounds of ammunition. The Pentagon had anticipated and State had promised U.S. supplies and training by Special Forces "A" Teams for Latin American units. But neither agency had foreseen the extent to which it would be called upon to fulfill this commitment. The Honduran unit presented the worst case. In addition to the Class I, II, and V supplies and tentage that the United States furnished all the Latin contingents, the Hondurans also required fatigues, socks, and underwear.

To U.S. commanders on the scene, the Military Assistance Program for Latin America seemed seriously flawed. The Hondurans so depleted existing supplies in the Dominican Republic that Palmer, through Admiral Moorer, urged CINCSOUTH not to deploy further OAS contingents to the Dominican Republic "until they are equipped to exist and function in the field." Once referred to Washington, the request died from lack of presidential support. LBJ wanted an operative multinational peace force, and he wanted it immediately. The best Palmer was able to extract from Washington was a directive from Secretary of Defense McNamara to the effect that "additional food, clothing, tentage, and non-U.S. standard ammunition be sent directly to the Dominican Republic from storage depots in the continental United States."[6]

If establishing the IAAF proved a logistical headache, it was nothing compared to the nightmare Palmer endured in trying to place the command under U.S. control. On the day the OAS approved the combined force, the State and Defense Departments named Bennett the U.S. coordinator for working out, in the words of the resolution, the "technical measures necessary to establish a Unified Command of the OAS." Palmer was to work with Bennett, and both were to "prepare recommendations as to [the] structure and functioning of [the] Unified Command and submit these to Washington for approval before commencing discussions with [Latin American] Force Commanders or OAS Committee."[7]

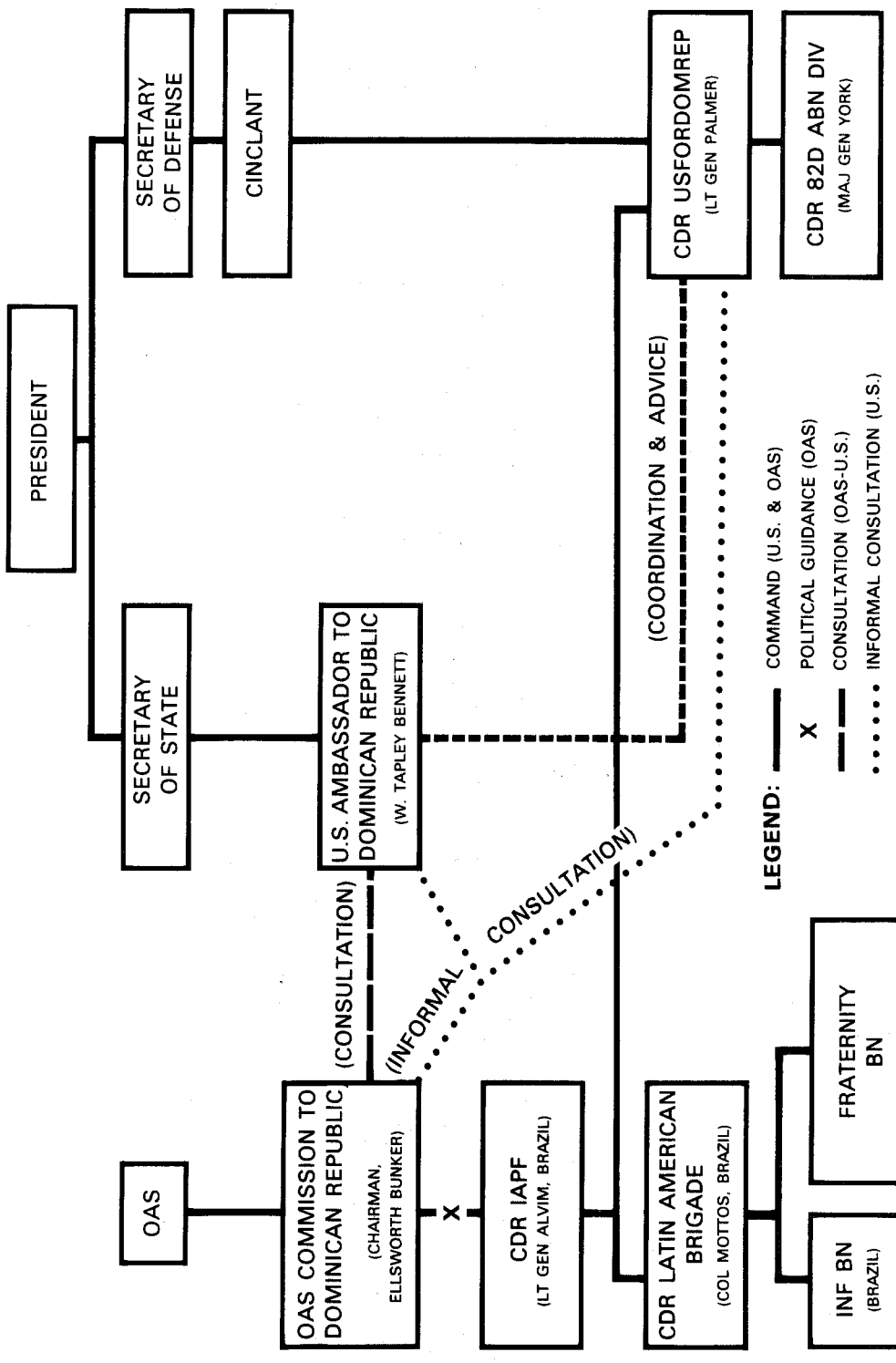
Three days later, Bennett and Palmer submitted their recommendations for the IAAF command structure. A combined staff, they suggested, should follow the U.S. example because "most Latin American officers who would be nominated for these assignments would probably have been exposed to U.S. staff procedures and structure in CONUS schools." Within the staff, U.S. officers should fill the posts of secretary, C4 (logistics), and C6 (communications), "as a minimum." (On 11 May, Palmer established a separate staff section, J7, within his command. Called the Director of Military Affairs for Inter-American Armed Forces, it would provide the nucleus of the U.S. contribution to the combined staff, once the latter became operational.) In connection with another matter, Palmer and Bennett had the opportunity to convey their conviction that the commander of the IAAF "should be a US General Officer, probably of three star rank."[8]

On one point, Palmer was insistent: nothing should be allowed to interfere with the freedom of action of U.S. forces. That the IAAF could pose such a threat came across in his and Bennett's warning—which could hardly have come as a revelation to their superiors—that "should OAS Commission refuse to authorize IAAF to take action, high level Washington decision would be required with respect to possible unilateral US action by other units." The "other units" would be U.S. forces not committed to the IAAF, for in Palmer's view, it would be folly to place more than a token brigade under OAS jurisdiction. But regardless of the number of U.S. troops attached to the force, their freedom of action and, consequently, the furtherance of U.S. interests could only be ensured by the appointment of a U.S. commander.[9]

From a purely military standpoint, the position taken by Palmer and Bennett made good sense. Diplomatically, however, it was untenable. The OAS would accept nothing less than the subordination of all U.S. troops to the operational control of a Latin American IAAF commander. In the words of one study, "An intra-regional military peace-keeping force under OAS control was far more palatable in Latin America than was one under U.S. control; at the same time, the regional force would tend to seek the same goals as the United States—ending the strife and preventing a Communist takeover." Recognizing these realities and unwilling to risk a return to unilateralism with all of its adverse consequences, the State Department, with the support of Secretary of Defense McNamara, overrode the strenuous and frequently voiced objections of Palmer, Bennett, Moorer, and the JCS and acceded to the Latin American demands. As General Wheeler explained to Palmer and Moorer, "We devised the IAF concept for the purpose of giving an international cover to American military involvement in the Dominican Republic and to legitimize our activities in world opinion by identifying them with the OAS." All U.S. troops in the Dominican Republic would serve in the IAAF under a Latin American general. On 22 May, the 13th Plenary Session of the OAS requested that Brazil designate the IAAF commander and the United States the deputy commander. General Hugo Panasco Alvim and General Palmer were so named. Because Alvim would not arrive in the Dominican Republic for a week, Palmer became acting commander until 29 May, when the Brazilian general assumed command.[10]

A formal ceremony to sign the Act Establishing the Inter-American Force (the word "Armed" being dropped from the title) took place on 23 May at the Hotel Embajador. The document stated, in part, that while assigned to the force, members would remain in their national services but "serve under the authority of the Organization of American States and subject to the instructions of the Commander through the chain of command. Command of national contingents, less operational control, shall remain vested in the commanders of the respective national contingents." The IAF would consist of "the Unified Command and the national contingencies of Member States assigned to it," while the Unified Command would "consist of the Commander of the Inter-American Force, the Deputy Commander, and the Staff." The "sole purpose" of the force would be "that of cooperating in the restoration of normal conditions in the Dominican Republic, in maintaining the security of its inhabitants and the inviolability of human rights, and in the establishment of an atmosphere of peace and conciliation that will permit the functioning of democratic institutions." The headquarters of the IAF would be located in the Hotel Jaragua. On 2 June, in another change in title, the IAF became the Inter-American Peace Force (IAPF) (see figure 6).[11]

Once Alvim arrived, he "exercised command in the fullest sense," reserving for himself the final word on major decisions. Despite that, he and Palmer worked well together on the whole, with the American deputy managing to acquire, through a variety of ways, as much flexibility and freedom of action as he could hope for under the circumstances. Alvim began by



Source: Letter, Bruce Palmer to Roger Spiller, 15 November 1983.

Figure 6. U.S. and OAS relationships, Dominican Republic, May—June 1965

Army Magazine

General Palmer presents OAS flag to General Alvim at command ceremony

accepting all of Palmer's recommendations on key staff positions, save one: the chief of staff would be a Latin American officer, his deputy a U.S. officer—not vice versa. The Brazilian general appointed U.S. officers to the C4 and C6 positions and as deputies to Latin American officers assigned to the remaining slots (see figure 7). An equal number of U.S. and Latin American officers headed the 156-man headquarters staff, the vast majority of which was composed of American enlisted men. Palmer had ensured the imbalance when he set up J7, which now expanded and formed the cadre

for the IAPF staff. The shrewdness of the move provided the deputy commander with one technique of influencing IAPF activities: an officer on Palmer's USFORDOMREP staff would prepare a paper prescribing what the U.S. general wanted and then pass the paper to a U.S. officer on the combined staff to "develop and promulgate as an IAPF action." Also placing Latin American commanders and staff officers at a disadvantage was the leverage the United States accrued within the IAPF simply by providing it with over half its troop strength and almost all its logistical support.[12]

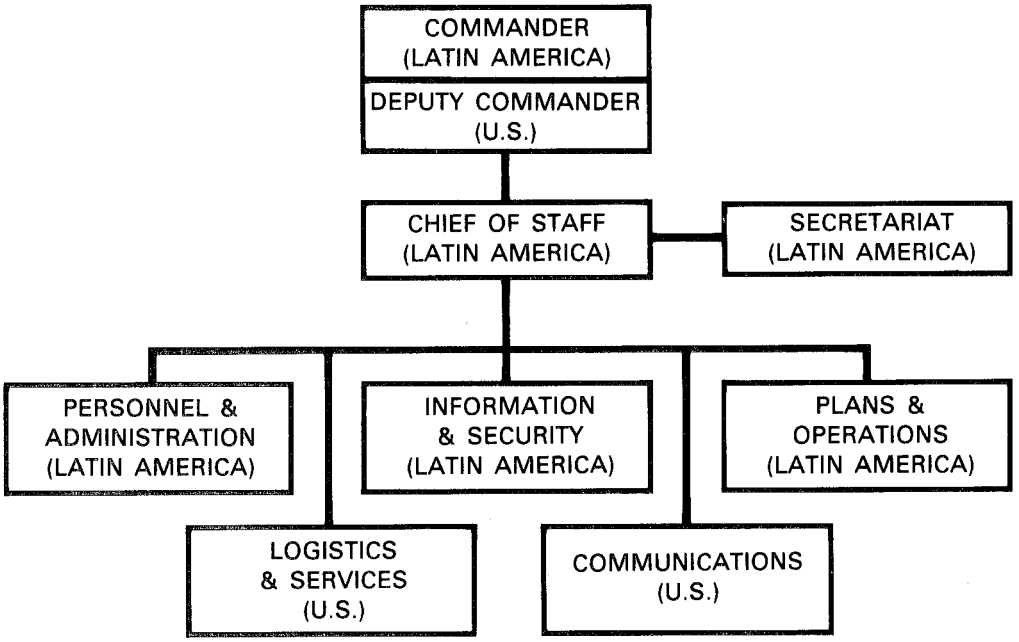


Figure 7. Headquarters, IAPF

Published on 29 June, IAPF Force Regulations gave Palmer a good deal of latitude to act in the name of the commander.[13] The organization of IAPF combat elements into two separate forces, one U.S., the other Latin American, further strengthened Palmer's hand. A Latin American brigade (later subdivided into a Brazilian Battalion and a Fraternity Battalion, the latter comprising a Brazilian marine company and the remaining Latin units) operated under a Brazilian colonel, while USFORDOMREP retained its identity as the U.S. contingent (see figure 8). Alvim tried to assume direct command of the 82d, but Palmer deflected the move, thus ensuring that orders to American forces would have to be channeled through him.[14] According to Lawrence Greenberg's analysis of the IAPF,

> this procedure satisfied Palmer, Moorer, and the joint chiefs' concerns about placing U.S. troops under the direct control of a foreign commander. In theory, U.S. forces would be under the operational control of the Inter-American Peace Force and, through it, the Organization of American States. In reality, they remained under the direct control of General Palmer, whom before he had

left for the island, General Wheeler had told that the president expected [Palmer] to follow directives from his national chain of command should differences between U.S. and OAS objectives arise.[15]

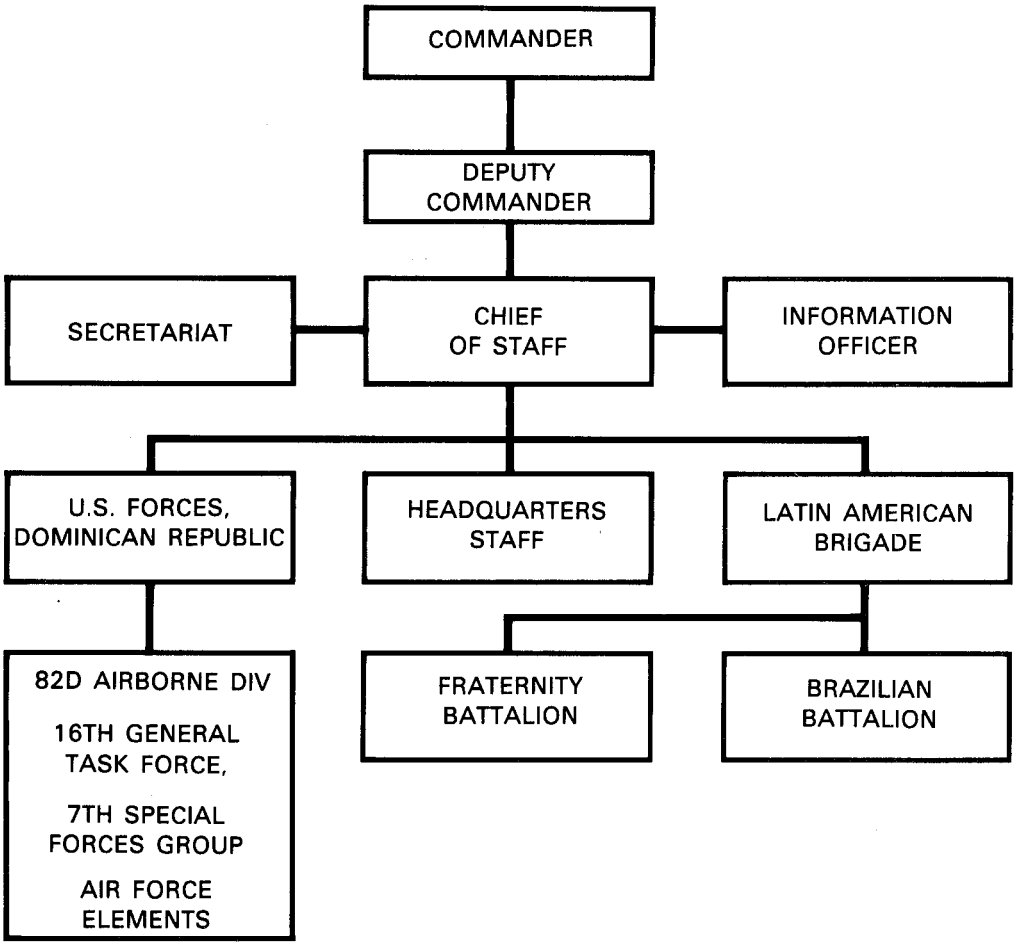


Figure 8. Organization, IAPF

Once the IAPF began to function, certain difficulties emerged. One had to do with finding suitable and language-qualified U.S. and Latin American staff personnel. Another concerned the uncoordinated and inappropriate tasks assigned the force by anyone associated with the OAS in the Dominican Republic. Most important, from the U.S. standpoint, was getting Alvim to approve a series of troop withdrawals that U.S. military leaders considered prudent. One reason Washington had pushed so hard for a Latin American military contingent to the Dominican Republic was to enable the president to reduce the Yankee presence in that country by at least 10,000 men. The withdrawal would signify a good-faith gesture in the spirit of multilateralism and provide soldiers needed to protect American interests elsewhere in the world. Once the Latin American contingents began to arrive at San Isidro,

the JCS solicited recommendations for U.S. troop withdrawals. CINCLANT's argument that the marines should be pulled out first in order to restore the U.S. capability to undertake military action in the Caribbean prevailed. By the time Alvim assumed command of the IAPF, the first Marine units had already pulled out. He readily approved redeployment of the others, and by 6 June, they, too, had left. Alvim also authorized redeployment of a number of units from the 82d before he became cautious during the summer and began to insist that further U.S. troop withdrawals await progress toward a negotiated settlement. Palmer chipped away at Alvim's position with mixed results. At one point in mid-June, he requested that Washington approve the deployment of an Army tank unit to bolster IAPF firepower, to intimidate opponents, and to use as an inducement for Alvim to release another infantry battalion. (By the time State endorsed the deployment of a tank company, a political settlement in the Dominican Republic was being implemented, and U.S. troop withdrawals had resumed.) In late June, Palmer did manage to obtain Alvim's blessing for a plan that entailed leaving behind, in the wake of peace negotiations, one three-battalion brigade of the 82d plus some miscellaneous units as the U.S. contribution to the IAPF until OAS-sponsored elections could be held.[16]

Upon reflection, Palmer came to agree that the creation of the IAPF was "a profound historical event with far-reaching implications." Yet he could not bring himself to endorse a permanent inter-American military force,

Dominican Crisis, 1965—1966

First contingent of U.S. marines leaving the Dominican Republic

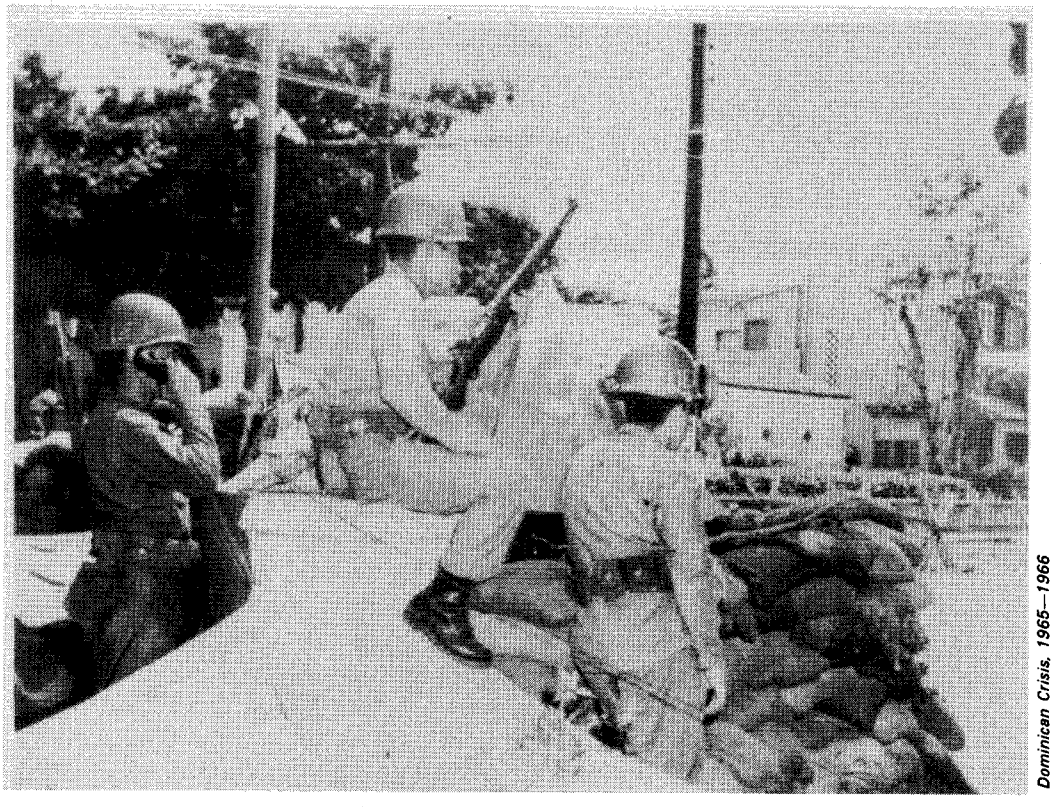
at least not without stringent reservations, the foremost being that the United States make no commitment that would impair its freedom of action and ability to respond rapidly in a crisis. Above all, he felt that the commander of such a force should be a U.S. general officer. In the Dominican Republic, the United States for the "first time in its history," Palmer contended, had turned over field command of its combat forces to a foreign officer. That "serious error" should never be repeated.[17]

* * *

As the Latin American Brigade became operational, its contingents performed a variety of duties. On 29 May, Brazilian troops relieved U.S. forces in the ISZ and western edge of the LOC. The Brazilians engaged in civic action projects, while three-man observer teams, composed of a Honduran, a Costa Rican, and an American team, patrolled all areas in Santo Domingo except Ciudad Nueva. Other IAPF teams investigated cease-fire violations, including several charges from the Constitutionalists that GNR troops were lobbing mortar shells into the rebel stronghold. At first, the IAPF was inclined to dismiss the allegations as propaganda, but newly acquired countermortar radar pinpointed the alleged firing location in northern Santo Domingo. Concrete evidence that Wessin's forces had violated the cease-fire brought an end to the attacks. The most grisly assignment for the investigation teams was looking into such atrocities as the mass execution of prisoners committed by both sides at the height of the brutal civil war.[18]

The presence of Latin American troops within the IAPF did not lead to good relations between the Constitutionalists and the multinational force. Quite the contrary. As IAPF units took up positions in the ISZ and LOC, the rebels launched a propaganda campaign intended to foment dissension within the ranks of the Latin American Brigade. The United States, the rebels charged, had given the Brazilians the most rigorous and dangerous assignments in the IAPF. Palmer responded to the allegations by arranging with Alvim to give the Latin Americans only the Palace area and a small portion of the ISZ to hold. The rebels then dropped their "soft-line" approach in favor of hurling rocks and verbal insults at the Latin Americans. On 6 July, the rebels even mounted a military probe of positions manned by the Latin American IAPF contingents. Showing contempt for the rules of engagement, the Latin Americans responded to the probe by starting a prolonged firefight. Soon thereafter, Constitutionalists began hoisting the first "Brazilian, Go Home" signs. Palmer applauded the failure of the propaganda offensive but regretted the "trigger-happiness on the part of [Latin American IAPF] troops which was later to be almost disastrous from the point of view of the negotiations."[19]

Palmer's concerns on this point were not immediately voiced. In fact, within days after becoming operational, the IAPF headquarters scored a negotiating coup that boosted morale among the staff and helped legitimize the new peacekeeping organization. The breakthrough involved the festering situation at the National Palace, an isolated bastion of several hundred Loyalist troops within the rebel sector. The rebels, beginning in early May,



Dominican Crisis, 1965–1966

Latin American members of the IAPF man a position on the LOC

had tried without success and, in one case, with the loss of several prominent leaders, to dislodge their opponents by force. Given the symbolic importance of controlling the building, State had authorized Bennett and Palmer to take military action if in their judgment it was the only way to save the lives of the soldiers from an all-out rebel attack. The Constitutionalists, having engaged in several firefights with U.S. units manning that portion of the LOC, had no desire to precipitate such a confrontation or to see the national monument destroyed. To defuse the situation, they entered into unsuccessful negotiations with the OAS and the GNR. In late May, the IAPF joined the talks and secured an agreement, reached on 1 June. Under the accord, GNR forces would be withdrawn, except for a token platoon of twenty-five men, and Brazilian troops would secure the building and the newly created demilitarized zone surrounding it. The next day, the agreement went into effect without incident.[20]

With the Palace neutralized, Palmer turned his attention to providing better security for the vital power plant, that, although controlled by the 82d, was vulnerable to rebel fire from an old hospital nearby. At one point in mid-May, the general had considered using military force "to push our lines further out in order to provide better security to both US troops and the facility, as [the] power plant is now practically on the front line." He

decided, instead, to negotiate with the Constitutionalists in an attempt to accomplish the same goal. On 10 June, however, negotiations collapsed when the rebels rejected IAPF proposals to extend the security line.[21] It was a tragic decision on the part of the Constitutionalists. Within days, Palmer would obtain his new security line and more in the bloodiest battle of the intervention pitting U.S. troops against Caamaño's forces.

IAPF officers and U.S. officials in Santo Domingo had anticipated some rebel military activity on 14 June, a national holiday, but the rally held that day in Ciudad Nueva was small and controlled. That night, a brief firefight broke out after a group of rebels fired into a Brazilian position, but it was a negligible engagement, apparently unauthorized by Caamaño. A rebel colonel later apologized to the Brazilians and promised courts-martial for the instigators, thus prompting IAPF speculation about rebel morale, unity, and frustrations.[22]

Discord within the Constitutionalist camp and Caamaño's inability to control his decentralized forces were what probably led some rebel groups to shoot into U.S. and Brazilian positions the next morning. The IAPF units under attack, particularly the 1st Battalions of the 505th and 508th Infantries, returned the small-arms fire in what began as just another "routine" firefight. But when the 505th suffered a casualty, the paratroopers "retaliated for their loss by generosity in terms of ammo expenditures."[23] The rebels, too, escalated from small arms to tear gas grenades, .50-caliber machine guns, 20-mm guns, mortars, rocket launchers, and tank fire. The 82d responded with every weapon allowed under the rules of engagement. Within two hours, a pitched battle was under way. The 82d hastily devised a plan to clear the area of rebels, and late that morning, York received permission from Alvim and Palmer to take the offensive. The 1st Battalion of the 508th launched the attack, supported from the LOC by the 2d Battalion of the 505th. Moving southward into rebel territory, the 1st Battalion met heavy resistance but managed within two hours to advance several blocks. The rapidity of the advance and the apparent disintegration of rebel forces to the front soon had Alvim and York thinking about pushing all the way to the Ozama.

The timely arrival of Palmer, apparently on orders from Washington, prevented such a move. In what several sources have described as an emotional exchange between Palmer and York, the deputy IAPF commander ordered the attack halted, even though everyone present realized that a military solution to the crisis would require only a few more hours. "I felt terrible about it," Palmer would recall years later, and "Alvim didn't like it worth a damn." York, although "sore," gained at least one concession. A company of the 1st Battalion of the 508th had moved west to capture the hospital near the power plant, something Palmer had failed to obtain through negotiations. Although committed to a political solution, even Palmer could not envision returning this key facility. He therefore ordered York to hold and secure the 82d's gains that morning. For his part, Palmer would return to headquarters and attempt to get permission for the 82d to incorporate those gains into the LOC. Traveling in a jeep without a radio, Palmer could

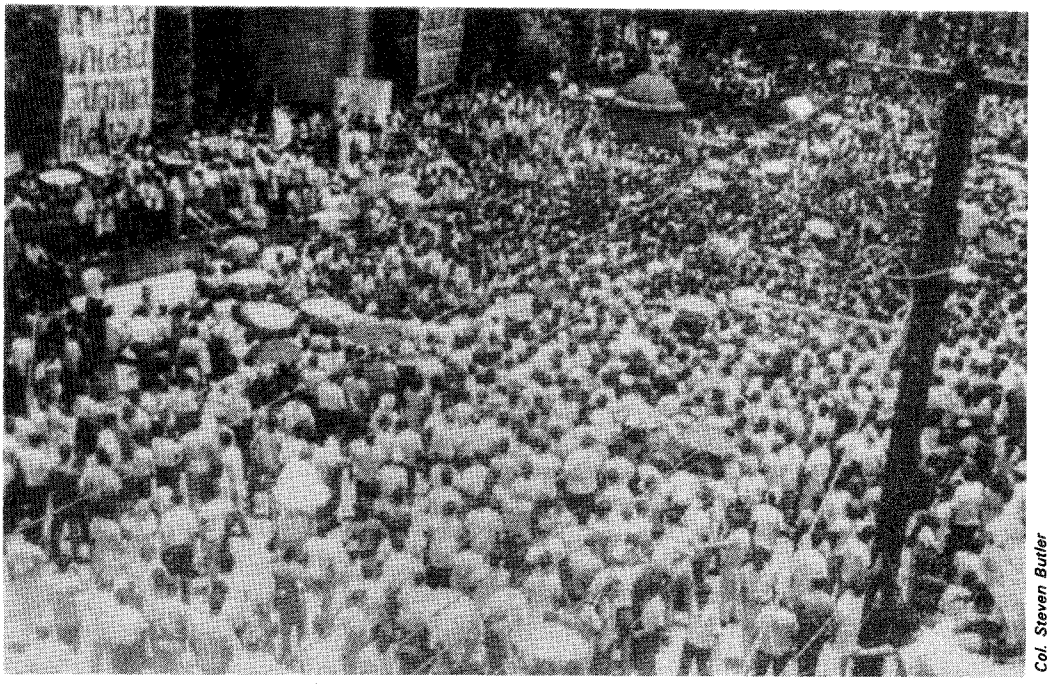
not be contacted en route to headquarters, and York used the interval to have the 1st Battalion, 505th Infantry, seize two additional blocks to the west. Moving out about 1600 local time, the paratroopers accomplished their mission by maneuvering through backyards and buildings to avoid open streets. By the time Palmer contacted York with approval to hold his ground, the LOC had been extended even farther into rebel territory. No American officer, including Palmer, seemed to mind. If there were regrets, they were over the decision not to deliver a knockout blow to the rebels as they cast off their uniforms and headed for the Ozama River. Even Bennett told Palmer, "It's too bad you didn't let the 82d go." An incredulous Palmer could only reply, "Are you joking?"

The fighting continued one more day, but there were no further advances by the IAPF. The 82d sustained thirty-one casualties, three of whom later died. The Brazilians, who had orders to remain on the defensive, suffered five wounded. U.S. sources estimated rebel casualties at 99 killed and more than 100 wounded. (Some sources place the rebel casualties, including civilians, at 300.) As a result of the fighting, U.S. troops extended the area of the LOC about thirty square blocks. When the United Nations Observer Team in the Dominican Republic demanded a return to the status quo ante, Alvim refused. Retention of the new positions shrank the rebel stronghold, provided the IAPF with better fields of fire and more security for the power plant, and served notice that the OAS, not the UN, was going to call the shots in the Dominican crisis. As for the rebels, after the fighting on 15—16 June, they became reluctant to attack U.S. positions. One rebel spokesman, in describing the action on the 15th, explained how, after a modest exchange of gunfire, "the Americans opened up and started shooting like crazy—like they were attacking Russia." After the 16th, deliberate harassment was directed primarily at Latin American troops, who engaged in "vigorous return fire," much to Palmer's chagrin. The Hondurans particularly, Palmer became fond of saying, "loved to throw hand grenades like popcorn."[24]

* * *

The mauling the Constitutionalists received on the 15th made them more amenable, but not yet committed, to a negotiated settlement, while rebel misfortunes only stiffened the resolve of Imbert's GNR to gain recognition as the provisional government of the country. Palmer had little sympathy for either side at this point: "Although Imbert is *not* a winner and shouldn't be considered so," he wrote, "Caamaño and his communist associates are definitely losers." Given the passions and political differences separating the two contenders, diplomacy promised little more than prolonged negotiations to end the civil war. Yet no matter how ponderous, negotiations also held out the best hope for restoring and, more important, maintaining stability without recourse to military dictatorship. The ad hoc OAS committee, in Palmer's opinion, had to find and "impose" a political solution occupying the "practical middle ground" between extreme Left and Right.[25]

Palmer's sentiments coincided with Bunker's instructions to establish a "middle road" government not necessarily associated with the belligerents.



Col. Steven Butler

A Constitutionalist rally in Santo Domingo

On 18 June, the OAS committee presented both sides a set of general propositions that could serve as the basis for a negotiated settlement. The key passages called for the establishment of a provisional government representing "all sectors" within the country, to be followed by OAS-sponsored elections. Neither the Constitutionalists nor the GNR rushed to embrace the OAS formula. In the rebel camp, Communist elements proclaimed their intention to continue fighting even if Caamaño agreed to a provisional government, while from Puerto Rico, Juan Bosch complicated matters by urging his followers to reject a provisional government headed by Héctor García-Godoy, a Dominican businessman and diplomat and the OAS's handpicked moderate candidate for interim president. Meanwhile, the GNR alternated between endorsing OAS attempts to create a provisional government and proclaiming that the GNR itself legally constituted such a government. Each side, Constitutionalist and Loyalist, sought to improve its respective bargaining position by mounting a war of nerves against the other that included demonstrations, propaganda, and military incidents.[26]

In early August, the ad hoc OAS Committee published an Act of Reconciliation, again a series of general propositions to be used as the basis for a negotiated settlement. As part of the package, the Constitutionalists and GNR were to accept the OAS-sponsored Provisional Government of García-Godoy as the "sole and sovereign government of the Dominican Republic," agree to the dismantlement of rebel defenses and the incorporation of Ciudad Nueva into the ISZ on a temporary basis, be the recipients of a general

amnesty, turn arms carried by civilians over to the government, and, without punitive measures, reintegrate into the regular armed forces members of the military who had defected to the rebel side. Furthermore, upon installment of a provisional government, the military would "return to their barracks and place themselves under the orders of their Commander in Chief, the Provisional President."[27]

Three weeks of intense negotiations followed, during which the Act of Reconciliation was revised several times. In Palmer's opinion, alterations designed to placate Caamaño so "watered down" the military and security aspects of the plan that he and Alvim "finally stated on 22 August that we could not accept any further changes." Imbert went further by rejecting the proposed agreement and reneging on his promise to resign in favor of García-Godoy. But Imbert's position by this time was weak. Revelations of GNR atrocities had undermined his public image,[28] and his political authority suffered from a U.S. decision to stop financing the GNR until an agreement was reached. When Imbert refused to discuss the matter of his resignation with the OAS or García-Godoy, Bunker turned to the CIA chief of station, who in a meeting at Imbert's home assured the GNR leader that the United States would not allow the disintegration of the Dominican military or the fall of the country to the Communists. With these reassurances, Imbert resigned on 30 August, citing U.S. pressure as one reason for his decision.

Extremists on both sides tried to sabotage the agreement—the rebels by attacking IAPF lines, Wessin's forces by firing mortars into the rebel area. But U.S. troops showed their usual restraint, and countermortar radar again provided evidence that only a small group was involved. On 31 August, Caamaño signed the Act of Reconciliation for the rebels. After receiving written clarification from García-Godoy on certain ambiguous parts of the agreement pertaining to demilitarization, disarmament, and the reintegration of rebel soldiers, the military chiefs who had served Imbert signed the act on behalf of the GNR. On 3 September, García-Godoy took the oath of office as president of the Provisional Government.[29]

If any person deserved credit for the settlement, it was Ellsworth Bunker. The dominant figure in the negotiations, "he was very much his own man," whose interpretation of trends in Latin America dictated his "basic negotiating posture." Latin America, he believed, was moving inexorably to the Left. The United States could not stop this movement but with insight and patience might moderate it before it reached the Communist extreme. Thus, Bunker was more willing than Imbert, Bennett, Alvim, and Palmer to make concessions to Caamaño's Constitutionalists. Not that Palmer was completely unsympathetic to Bunker's views. In some respects, Bunker served as Palmer's tutor in Latin American realities. Added to this tutelage were the insights the general gained from his close working relationship with Bennett. Daily communications with diplomatic, political, and military officials in the United States revealed to Palmer the complex considerations affecting U.S. policy in the Dominican Republic. That the general came to advocate a political solution to the country's crisis says much about the education he received during this assignment. When the new CIA chief of station

first met the general that summer, he judged Palmer to be "possessed of a political sensitivity unusual in field officers."[30]

On the subject of the peace settlement, Palmer admired Bunker's negotiating method, which was to "allow pressures to build up just short of an explosion and, if by that time an agreement had not been reached between the two sides, to present a final OAS proposal and drive hard for what amounted to an imposed solution." The general also liked the way Bunker used the implied threat of force to move negotiations along, even though the OAS ambassador was adamantly opposed to a military solution. Palmer was less laudatory about Bunker's failure to seek IAPF advice about certain military provisions of the settlement, provisions that Palmer believed would "weaken or destroy the effectiveness of the Dominican Armed Forces," the "only effective, indigenous force capable of preventing a return to the chaos and mob rule of April 1965 or of countering a seizure of power by Leftist extremists following the withdrawal of the IAPF."[31] That Palmer's concerns along these lines were well founded became apparent as the IAPF shed its neutrality and became the protector of the new Provisional Government.

* * *

The inauguration of García-Godoy did not bring an immediate stop to violence and political passions, but for the most part, these remained at a manageable level. With the installation of the new government, formal U.S. troop withdrawals resumed after a two-month hiatus. During the interval, however, individuals had been reassigned and not replaced (because of the buildup and combat losses in Vietnam), dropping the strength of USFORDOMREP to under 10,000 men—at least 3,000 below authorized strength. Some battalions were operating at only 50 percent of full strength. Not until October did USFORDOMREP receive a priority on individual replacements. By then, redeployment of units was reducing the U.S. contribution to the IAPF to the three-battalion brigade (plus miscellaneous units) that Palmer had proposed in June. When completed, troop withdrawals would leave 6,000 U.S. soldiers in the country as part of an IAPF totaling 8,800. Palmer and Alvim agreed that unless the civil war resumed, this force would be capable of restoring order and protecting the Provisional Government.[32]

Between the establishment of the Provisional Government and the elections held in June the following year, the IAPF had to intervene only a handful of times to save García-Godoy's somewhat shaky administration or to quell disorders that threatened the country's stability. The first test of the IAPF's new role of protector came within a week after García-Godoy assumed office; it involved the difficult task of getting General Wessin y Wessin to leave the country. Always resented because of his elite position, the general had become the object of even more controversy because of his decision to bombard and strafe the city on 25 April, thus triggering the civil war. Even before the formation of the Provisional Government, it was generally assumed that García-Godoy would have to accede to Constitutionalist demands for Wessin's ouster in order to achieve rebel adherence to the Act of Reconciliation. Wessin's belief that the presidency of García-Godoy

was the first step toward a Communist takeover of the country further weakened the general's standing. When the Provisional Government became a reality, the IAPF made access into the LOC and ISZ easier but continued to block the eastern end of the Duarte bridge to prevent *CEFA* troops from entering Santo Domingo in an attempt to overthrow the government and resume the civil war.[33]

On 5 September, the new president abolished *CEFA* as a separate force (a directive that was ignored) and called for its integration into the Dominican Army. The next day, after Wessin held a press conference to declare his willingness to lead the country in a crusade against communism, García-Godoy could no longer avoid the inevitable. On the 8th, with his military chiefs and Bennett present, the president told Wessin face-to-face that the general would have to leave the country. Wessin agreed but early the next morning began to mobilize his unit for a march on the city. The IAPF reacted immediately. When *CEFA* forces began to move, they were quickly intercepted and escorted to their Armor Center, where the commanding officer agreed to confine them to the compound. On Palmer's orders, IAPF troops blockaded the Armor Center, surrounded Wessin's headquarters, and, with the aid of helicopters, moved into the landing zone near the general's house. With the troops in place, Alvim, Palmer, and the Dominican military chiefs proceeded to Wessin's home, where Alvim "called upon the Saints in the Catholic Church" in an emotional appeal for Wessin to leave the country. When Wessin temporized, Palmer bluntly instructed the interpreter, "You tell him he has no choice; he is going!" Palmer also conveyed to Wessin that force would be used if necessary. Wessin relented. The matter was settled, although some anxious moments occurred when the emissaries escorted Wessin through an angry group of guards who feared that their boss was being taken away to be shot.

Before going to the airport, Wessin asked to be allowed to say good-bye to his troops at an academy near San Isidro. Palmer agreed but lost Wessin's car in the dark. At that point, according to Palmer, "we tore off to San Isidro. Everybody in a different car chasing each other." When Wessin did not show up at the airfield, Palmer ordered the 82d's assistant commander, Jack Deane, to fetch the general. In an extraordinary act of courage, Deane bluffed his way into the *CEFA* fortress and returned to San Isidro with the wayward Dominican. It was, in Palmer's words, a "delicate mission." Wessin "had a whole compound armed to the teeth. It was really fortunate that something didn't happen there. A spark could have ignited that thing and I don't know what the hell would have happened." That night, after a tearful farewell at San Isidro, Wessin boarded a plane for Panama, an interim stop before proceeding to Miami, where he became the Dominican consul general. The general's departure, Palmer noted, "was a great blow to conservatives and rightist extremists."[34]

Because the rebels refused to surrender their weapons until they felt secure from attack by the Dominican military, Wessin's departure constituted a first step toward the demilitarization of Ciudad Nueva. It would also be the last for over a month. In the interval, the rebel area experienced a

breakdown in law and order, as gangsters and right-wing and left-wing hit squads roamed the streets and Communist-inspired propaganda and bombings intensified. There were also indications that the Communists were planning a terrorist campaign against IAPF and government personnel. In an attempt to force García-Godoy to take action to remedy the situation, Palmer devised a plan to dismantle the LOC and ISZ surrounding the rebel area, thus creating a vacuum that the president would have to fill. To lessen the chances for conflict and to protect the Constitutionalists from reprisals, the plan called for the removal of rebel military forces under IAPF escort to the 27th of July barracks. Caamaño agreed to the plan, and on 13 and 14 October, military police and troops from the 82d evacuated the rebel military. Checkpoints around the camp ensured that only Caamaño and a handful of select officers and their bodyguards carried arms outside the area. Concurrently, the IAPF dismantled the checkpoints and barriers that had separated Loyalists from Constitutionalists.[35]

The next phase of the plan called for García-Godoy to demilitarize what had been the rebel zone by sending in his own military, which he distrusted, or the IAPF. He did neither. Instead, he stalled and then accepted an alternate plan put forward by the UN observers and Caamaño to have Ciudad Nueva searched by four-man teams over a period of several days. Palmer was livid. He dismissed the new plan as "patently absurd," and as he predicted, its results were "completely ineffectual." The enactment of the farce confirmed for him what he had suspected for some time: García-Godoy was a "spineless" man who kowtowed to Leftist elements while gratuitously alienating his own military chiefs. With five U.S. airborne battalions and a tank company still in the country, together with the Latin American Brigade, Palmer postponed further troop redeployments and sought authorization for the IAPF to clear the city—whether García-Godoy approved or not. Knowing that several hundred hard-core rebels had reentered Ciudad Nueva from the 27th of July camp, he urged immediate action before rebel forces increased to such proportions as to threaten a renewal of hostilities.[36]

Bunker, Alvim, and State liked Palmer's plan. Even García-Godoy approved it after having first received a nod from Caamaño, who hoped "to persuade the hard-core rebels remaining in the city to allow a bloodless entry." At the last minute, a nervous Dominican president tried to cancel the operation, only to learn that the IAPF was already committed. The IAPF troops—three airborne infantry battalions, the tank company, and the Latin American Brigade—crossed into Ciudad Nueva from all directions at dawn, 25 October. Meeting only scattered resistance and neither suffering nor inflicting casualties, the IAPF secured the area in an hour. The operation uncovered few arms caches but did yield an unexpected prize—"a fine haul of incriminating Communist documents." When informed that the area had been pacified without bloodshed, a "hoarse and nervous" García-Godoy "finally calmed down."[37]

The Wessin affair and the demilitarization of Ciudad Nueva brought home to García-Godoy in different ways "the fact that the IAPF was the

Col. Steven Butler

A sample of rebel arms seized by U.S. troops

key to his survival." It was also the protective shield for former rebels—so long as they stayed within Santo Domingo. What could happen when they did not was vividly illustrated by an episode on a Sunday in mid-December, when Caamaño insisted, against all advice, on attending a memorial mass for a slain rebel buried outside Santiago, a Loyalist bastion to the north of the capital.[38] Sunday was traditionally a day for church, drink, and recreation. When the arrival of Caamaño and his armed entourage became known to the "rummed up" populace, the situation in Santiago became extremely volatile. As could have been predicted, shooting broke out at the cemetery, and Caamaño and over 100 of his followers fled to refuge nearby in the Hotel Matum. Three hundred former Loyalist troops stationed in Santiago surrounded the hotel and opened fire. Caamaño returned the fire, and a battle lasting several hours commenced. Guests of the hotel, including a Puerto Rican circus troop, became virtual hostages of the former rebels. A State Department counsel stationed in Santiago went into the Matum in an effort to mediate a cease-fire but succeeded only in adding his name to the hostage list. A U.S. military intelligence officer who had observed these developments telephoned the grim news to Santo Domingo. His report that Loyalist forces were using tanks (without high-explosive rounds, however,

that could have destroyed the hotel) and that Americans numbered among the hostages moved the IAPF to action.

In hopes of avoiding a bloodbath at the hotel, García-Godoy authorized the IAPF command to dispatch troops to Santiago. A company of the 2d Battalion, 508th Infantry, departed within an hour of being alerted. The battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel John Costa, followed a short time later. After receiving a briefing at the Santiago airfield, he went with a small party by jeep to the hotel. The IAPF company followed on foot. When Costa reached the hotel, he passed through the line of angry Dominican soldiers surrounding the building and went inside to talk to Caamaño. The former rebel leader was visibly nervous and looking for an honorable way out of his predicament. Against the advice of his suspicious and more militant advisers, he accepted Costa's word that the IAPF would protect him and his men. Soon thereafter, the hostages were released.

By then, the IAPF company had arrived, and Costa had placed it between the opposing forces. He also declared himself to be in charge of the situation, much to the chagrin of the Dominican commander who wanted to storm the hotel. Several tense hours passed with the disposition of forces resembling a small-scale model of Santo Domingo during the height of the U.S. intervention. Bad weather delayed the dispatch of more helicopters from the capital, but once they arrived on Monday, the evacuation of Caamaño's group proceeded peacefully. An incident that could have plunged the country back into civil war had been narrowly averted, despite the casualties suffered by both sides (four Constitutionalists and eleven Loyalists killed and eighteen others wounded).

The Hotel Matum affair was followed by yet another crisis, this one bringing to a head the tension that had been building since September between García-Godoy and his military chiefs. As all parties to the peace settlement clearly understood, the Act of Reconciliation did not resolve the issues that had led to civil war, it only provided the mechanism for doing so. The Provisional Government needed as wide a base of support as possible, which meant that García-Godoy, aside from having to prove that he was not a U.S. puppet, had to give moderate Leftists some hope that the government could implement some reforms lest the moderates move farther to the Left. Hence, the president's deference to Caamaño and the appointment of former rebels to cabinet positions that angered and alarmed most American officials.[39] Caamaño and others from the rebel side, as one of the conditions for their cooperation, demanded the removal of prominent Loyalist officers—beginning with Wessin and moving on to other military chiefs, including the newly appointed secretary for the armed forces, Rivera Caminero. Because García-Godoy was not certain he could trust his military chiefs to support him and his overtures to the Left, he was inclined to accept Caamaño's demands.

Before that could happen, Palmer was telling the OAS Committee in forceful terms that he would only support the dismissal of the military chiefs if ordered to do so by the highest authorities in Washington. Even then,

Dominican Crisis, 1965-1966

Helicopter at Santiago airfield awaiting evacuation of Caamaño's entourage

Palmer warned, Alvim and the Latin American IAPF officers would probably refuse to support the government thereafter, in which case the IAPF would dissolve. These were strong words coming from a military officer on what could be construed as a political issue. But Palmer and Alvim fervently believed that the current secretary and service chiefs of the Dominican armed forces were best qualified to control the military situation in the country. The replacement of these men by incompetents would pave the way for a left-wing takeover of the government, conservative countermeasures, and the renewal of civil war. Bunker accepted Palmer's assessment and worked to prevent—or at least forestall—dismissal of the chiefs. (Palmer, it should be noted, also used his powers of persuasion with the chiefs to keep them working with García-Godoy and, in one instance, from mounting a coup against him.) In November, after the demilitarization of Ciudad Nueva, relations between the Dominican president and his military officers improved, but not to the extent of removing fundamental differences over what paths the government should take in ruling the country.[40]

The Hotel Matum affair in December convinced many Caamaño supporters that the military chiefs still sought to defeat the Constitutionalist movement. Several segments of the population, including the sugar workers—"the mainstay of the slowly reviving economy"—threatened to go on strike unless the president fired Rivera Caminero and the three military chiefs. Bunker argued with García-Godoy against bowing precipitately to these demands but to no avail. The president was determined to act. Accepting that, Bunker then proposed a solution whereby military leaders from each

side would leave the country. García-Godoy agreed. But on 6 January 1966, when he issued a decree announcing the overseas posting of his military chiefs and certain Constitutionalist officers—including Caamaño—Rivera Caminero and other officers who had reluctantly supported García-Godoy up to that point broke with the government and seized the main radio station. García-Godoy, through the OAS Committee, instructed the IAPF to suppress the attempted coup. Alvim refused, saying that "he did not take orders from the Dominican government." Under OAS pressure, he reluctantly changed his mind and committed the IAPF. Backed by troops, he and Palmer then met the leaders of the uprising and worked out an end to the crisis. In the aftermath, Caamaño agreed to an overseas assignment and departed the country later in the month. In February, García-Godoy maneuvered Rivera Caminero and the service chiefs into resigning. He replaced them with officers he considered more sympathetic to civilian democracy.[41]

The attempted military coup in January had at least two serious consequences for the U.S. involvement in the post-civil war phase of the Dominican crisis. The first effect was to undermine U.S. plans to reorganize and reform the Dominican armed forces, the goal being to make them more professional, less corrupt, and enthusiastic supporters of civilian democracy—in short, an apolitical force that would stand as a bulwark against right-wing and, more important, left-wing extremism. After the events of January and February, the United States feared that an intensive reform and rebuilding program would only increase demoralization within military ranks,

Dominican Crisis, 1965—1966

Caamaño Deño (right) talks with Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker (back to camera) prior to the colonel's departure from the Dominican Republic

thus further weakening the institution and its ability to maintain security and order. In effect, the well-intentioned—if slightly unrealistic—U.S. program became a casualty of political necessity. The withdrawal of 82d units, which Palmer had resumed in November, would soon leave the United States with little leverage to initiate an overhaul of the Dominican forces.[42]

A second consequence of the January uprising was to call into question the reliability of Alvim as the IAPF commander. The success of the political settlement depended on placing the IAPF at the disposal of the Provisional Government when need be, but Alvim—in temporarily putting his conservative principles and sympathy for the military chiefs above his assigned duties—had hesitated. For all anyone knew, if the general found subsequent orders to be equally odious, he might refuse altogether to commit his forces. To preclude that possibility, Bunker, during a visit to Brazil in mid-January, arranged for the general's removal. Alvim would be recalled, ostensibly as a part of a routine rotation and a decision to downgrade the rank of the commanding officers in the IAPF. That meant that Palmer would leave the country as well, another measure to save Alvim's face. The changes in command proceeded as planned. Palmer returned to the United States on 17 January 1966, leaving Brigadier General Robert Linvill in charge of the three-battalion brigade that now formed the core of USFORDOMREP. Alvim returned to Brazil in February.[43]

On 1 March, a three-month campaign for elections scheduled for 1 June began. The two leading candidates were Balaguer and Bosch, both of whom had returned to the country, the former in June 1965, the latter, that September. Most American officials predicted a Bosch victory, but since his return, the rebels' ostensible leader had confined himself to his home, where he spent most of the campaign (earning himself the epithet, "*Juan de la cueva*" [Juan of the cave]). Balaguer, on the other hand, campaigned vigorously and won by 57 percent of the vote. Remaining IAPF forces began redeploying even before Balaguer took office on 1 July. On 21 September, the last units left the country as U.S. intervention in the Dominican Republic came to an end.

As the 82d and other American units returned home or to other duty stations, they left behind a more stable situation in which democracy, however fragile, had been restored, and a Communist takeover, however remote, had been averted. In accomplishing this, 27 U.S. soldiers had been killed in action and 172 wounded. For the Dominicans, the civil war and the return to a kind of stability acceptable to the United States had taken a much higher toll, estimated at at least 3,000 killed. Even critics of the intervention agree that had the United States not stepped in to end the hostilities, the figure would have been much higher.